Inference Role in TV Commercial Advertisements

Abstract

This research sheds light on the advertisements in general and on commercial advertisements in particular. It tries to explore the role of inference following the integrated typology of inference proposed by (Melchenko,2003) based on Grice's theory of conversational and conventional implicature. This typology is applied on seven commercial advertisements recorded from different international channels. The analysis of these data will show that how advertisers may use different ways to make their message (overt or covert) more persuasive.

Introduction:

Every minute a new product is manufactured but the ratio of their sale differs. This difference is not always due to the quality of the product but also sometimes due to the effect of advertisement. Advertising is a form of communication used to make people buy the product. It is about creating a message and sending it someone, hoping they will react someway (Wells, Moriarty, & Burnett, 2006,p.5). This kind of communication involved in different techniques used by producers. For example, they may tend to use different linguistic and non linguistic means including different colors, pictures, and many textual elements to attract the attention of people and force them implicitly to buy their product. They may also promote for their product via using pictures of singers, celebrities, and actors. Besides that, they may manipulate the linguistic elements in order to persuade consumers to buy their product. This manipulation can be at the word, sentence, phonetic, and lexical level (Czerpa, 2006,p.6). All of these methods differ according to the target audience. That is, the tremendous range of shared knowledge and specific language comprehension in advertisements necessitate the use of simplistic language to ensure universal readability (Leetaru, 2001,p.4).

Melchenko (2003) in her thesis states that there are different types of ads according to different criteria. One criterion is the medium of ads. Printed ads including those found in magazines and newspapers have the advantage of being available for details while the electronic ones including those appear on radio and TV appear for a moment. Electronic ads, however, sometimes are more effective due to the employment of sounds, pictures, and intonation , and they are heavy of implicature s. Implicature is one of the central aspects of advertising which involves the recipient in a process of inference-drawing (Melchenko, 2003). An implicature is something meant, implied, or suggested distinct from what is said (Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy). To make the role of implicature clearer, this study sheds light on inference-drawing processes and the role of implicature in advertising. We can convey information either implicitly or explicitly.
Explicitly, when we make our response as obvious as we can as in the following example:
X says: what is the time now?
Y replies: it is 10 o'clock
Implicitly, when we say "X" but imply "Y" as in the following example:
X: tomorrow , we will go to cinema , what about you?
Y: I have an appointment with the dentist.
Y's response is negative but s/he does not say that explicitly. This kind of implicature motivates the receiver to infer this implicature either from the context or from the conventional meaning of the word. Therefore, the implicature is defined as weak semantic implication or pragmatically in

terms of context (Vandijk,2005). These implicatures are either conventional derived from the conventional meaning of the words or conversational follows from Grice's maxims(1975). These maxims are :

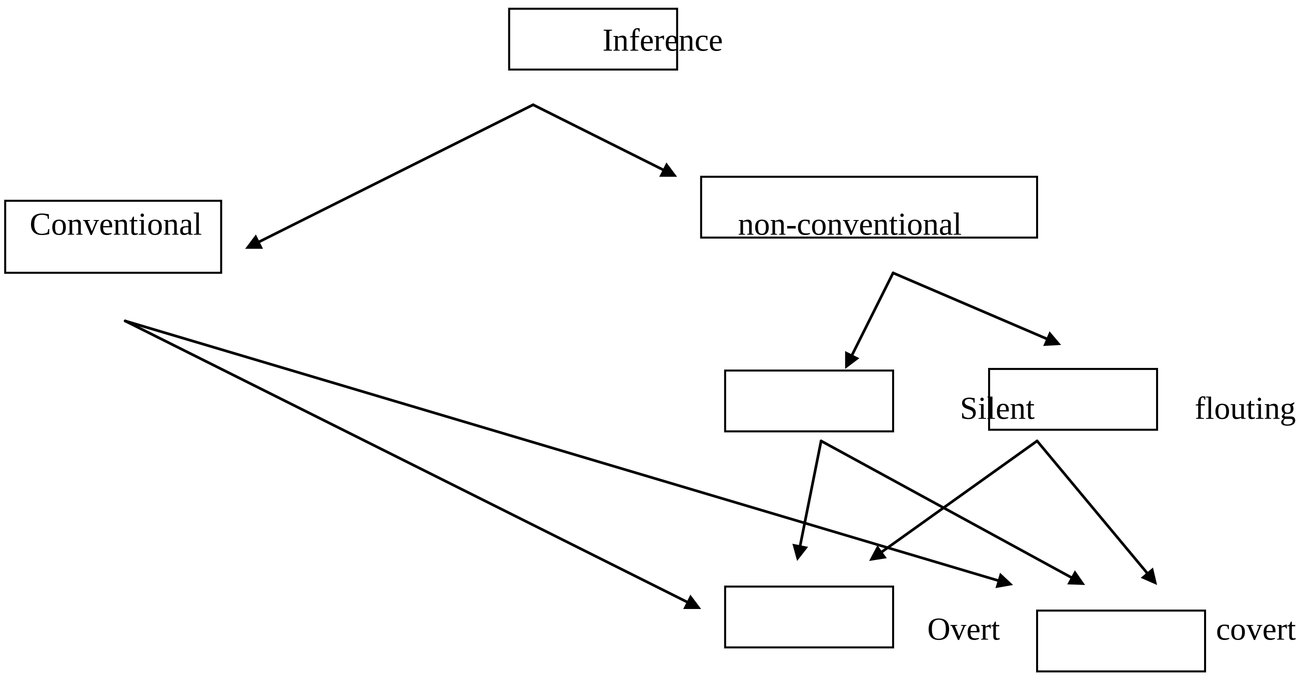
Quantity:
1. Make your contribution as informative as required (for the current purpose of the exchange)
2. Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.(Grice 1975:45)

Quality:
Try to make your contribution one that is true
1. Do not say what you believe to be false.
2. Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence. (ibid:46)

Relation:
1. Be relevant

Manner:
Be perspicuous
1. Avoid obscurity of expression
2. Avoid ambiguity
3. Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity)
4. Be orderly.

The inference typology proposed by Melchenko which will be used in this paper based on these maxims. It is illustrated in the following way:



Conventional inference is derived from the literal meaning of words. It is overt, if it is intended by the writer, and covert, when the writer in un-likely to accept the responsibility of it. The non-conventional silent inference occurs without any violation of the cooperative principles. The non-conventional flouting one brings out due to the violation of one of the cooperative principles.

Each type of non-conventional inference can be overt or covert. Therefore, the process of advertising has attracted the attention of many groups. For economists and marketing experts, advertising is a very important tool of free-market economy. For linguists, advertising is a type of discourse which functions either to inform or to persuade people. For ordinary people, it is a part of everyday life, which can be annoying or amusing, useful or misleading(Melchenko,2003).

The scope of the study:

This study intends to analyze the inference role in TV commercial advertisements. This study follows the inference typology proposed by Melchenko based on Grice's theory of conventional and conversational implicature. The data of this study includes seven commercial advertisements recorded from various international channels.

Data analysis:

The data are analyzed according to the inference typology presented in the introduction. The advertisements are transcribed and analyzed as follows:

The first advertisement:

Children voice: Mama tʕli iilaʕabi maʕna
Context: Children are playing in the yard and the mother cannot join them due to the bad weather.
Female voice: Txafin min taqlubat ?lmanax wa ?lmutaĝyrat ?lxarjiah ?lti taruk baŠrataki hadruʕ lilgafaf.
Female voice: ?ssaboon ?ly al idaʕaħ baŠrataki min ?lgaraaΘiim wa yatruk baŠrataki hadruʕ lilgafaf , lakin mafʕ lotted aʕĐal lil hayaniʕbaŠrah ?lħasasah.
Dettol ?alħimaayah ?alafĐal lilbaŠrah ?alħasasah.
Context: the mother washes her face and body uding dettol.
Dettol kuni mut?kidah 100%

From this advertisement, we can infer the following :
1. Soaps make the skin dry
2. Dettol is the best care for sensitive skin
3. Dettol is used your face and body
4. We are usually afraid of climatic changes
5. Only Dettol protects your skin from the effect of the climate change
6. Only Dettol protects your skin from the effect of germs

The first and the second inferences are non-conventional silent ones since they do not violate the maxims of Grice as well as they are covert because the advertiser may deny the responsibility of it. The third one is a non-conventional silent covert one since the writer does not need to deny the responsibility of it. Therefore, the non-conventional inference is either overt or covert if it answers the following question:
Does the writer deny the intended meaning ? if the answer is positive, the inference is covert , otherwise the inference is overt. The fourth one, however, is a conventional overt one since it can

be derived from the conventional meaning of words and the advertiser does not need to deny it. Regarding the last two ones, they are non-conventional flouting ones since they violate the maxims of quality and quantity. That is, the advertiser may not have enough evidence to claim them ,quality, as well as the contribution of this inference is not as informative as required ,quantity. Also, they are covert due to the reason explained previously.

The second advertisement:

Male voice: Šuf mama Šu tal haʕħilwah , ?awlak Šu sirha
Context: the father with his son in the yard looking at the mother.
Child voice: Mama Šu sirik
Mother voice: Siry hiwa K-special corn flakes.
Female voice: K-special corn flakes xitwatik ?alulah naħwa qawaam tatamaniin wa taqdir tastaħaqiin.

Inferences:

1. K-special corn flakes make women healthy since it contains fibers.
2. K-special corn flakes make women more beautiful
3. It is used to make women slim.
4. it is the first step for being slim.
5. It is the first step towards being appreciated by men.
6. It is only used by men.
7. Men prefer slim women to fat ones.

The first inference is non-conventional silent overt one. The rest, however, are non conventional flouting covert ones since they violate the maxim of quality. That is, the inference that only women need to be slim to get men's appreciation lacks evidence. This flouting inference is covert since the advertiser wants to avoid the responsibility of the social consequences of these implications(as cited in Forceville,1996,p.105)

Female singer voice: Walaa Šii ya.iinbagʕ
Context: The singer is looking for something that satisfies her
Walaa Šii yarĐinii,
Walaa Šii yakfinii,
Lazordy waħdu ykamlnii
Context: Once the female singer finds Lazordy, she puts it on and greets her fans. She becomes happy.
Lazordy kirmalik
Lazordy is a brand of Gold

Inferences:

1. Using a beautiful singer to make a promotion for Lazordy (gold) means:
a. To be gorgeous, use Lazordy
b. To be attractive, use Lazordy
2. Gold is the best gift for women.
3. Gold is the only thing that completes women's appearance.
4. Famous people choose Lazordy because it is the best.

The first inference is a non-conventional silent covert one while the second one is a conventional overt one. The third one is a non-conventional flouting covert one since it violates the maxims of quality and quantity. The last one, however, is a non-conventional silent overt one.

The fourth advertisement:

Female singer voice: Laħta Ša nuky iirˁħiluu, garbat ktiir wa fatŠat ktiir laħta iktaŠafat innu ?alassal hiwa farwat ras siħiya.
Male voice: Yara (a singer) ixtarat H & Shoulder laŠaug nim liimag raˁ urah
Male Voice: H & Shoulder la?anu ?Šaˁar ?agamiil yabda? Min farwat ras siħiyah.

Inferences:
Using a beautiful singer to make a promotion for shampoo means:
1. To be beautiful, use H & Shoulder
2. To be attractive, use H & Shoulder
3. To be beloved by people, use H & Shoulder
The other inferences that can be derived apart from hiring a singer are as follows:
4. Healthy scalp is the source of healthy hair
5. Healthy roots are the source of beautiful hair.

Inferences:

The first three inferences are non-conventional silent covert ones while the fourth one is conventional overt one. The last inference is a flouting overt one due to the use of a metaphor. Metaphor is a statement and/or picture causes a receiver to experience one thing in terms of another(as cited in Czerpa,2006). This metaphor is represented in the following : H & Shoulder is roots so depicting beautiful and healthy hair as a plant that is grown and its blossoming reflects the good health of the roots. As well, the health of hair reflects the good condition of its roots. In addition, using a male voice indicates that when you use H & Shoulder, you will be attracted by men. This inference is a non-conventional flouting covert one since it violates the maxim of quality.

The fifth inference:
Female voice: ?lqiŠrah raħat wa ?lyoum ?bda? ħayat gadidah fii asˁ malaˁħafah.
Context: a Girl erases the word "no" from the garment on which written " la yuugad waĐa?if" by her hair after using Sunsilk shampoo.
Female voice: iiˁŠi ħayatik bila ħiduud ma.klisnuS aˁ
Context: She is happy since she makes the first interview in her work as a journalist.

Inferences:

1. Dandruff makes people unsuccessful
2. Dandruff is the reason behind being unemployed
3. To find a job, use Sunsilk
4. To live without risks, use Sunsilk
5. Sunsilk is the best for a good life.

6. Sunsilk makes your life colorful
7. Sunsilk makes feel free while other types of Shampoo makes you feel handcuffed since they cause dandruff

The first three inferences are flouting covert ones since they violate the maxim of quality. The fourth one, however, is a conventional overt one. Regarding the last three ones are flouting covert ones since they violate the maxims of quality and quantity. That is, they are not informative as required.

The sixth inference:

Female voice: ?lyoum ?awal youm fii muoylʕ .diidij ʕiqaw uhal qiirat tayadib luk ‹iilamaʕ ba?uul naʕam liliᴉltizam, naʕam liltumouħ, nalil maʕan ‹mayiqlil maʕΘiqah binafs.
Female voice: ?sas nagaħ hiwa tamasukii bi mabad?ii wa ?lΘiqah binafs ?lii ahayinataʕFair & Lovely. Fair & Lovely , naʕam lii taħqiiq ?laħlam, nalil maʕħayat.
Context: a Girl applies for a job newly. She lacks self-confidence and her performance does not satisfy her employer. Once she uses Fair & Lovely ,which gives her the sensation of confidence, she becomes more active. Also, it helps her achieves her ambitions.

Inferences:
1. Fair & Lovely makes you successful
2. Fair & Lovely gives the confidence sensation
3. Abiding by principles makes you successful
4. Using Fair & Lovely helps you achieving your dreams
5. Fair & Lovely makes you love life

The first three inferences are non-conventional silent covert ones while the fourth and the fifth ones are conventional since they can be derived from the literal meaning of the words. The last one is a flouting covert one because it violates the maxim of quality.

Conclusion:
It can be concluded from this study that there are various techniques employed in advertisements to convince consumers of purchasing products. These techniques can be overt or covert. The majority of advertisers ,however, tend to communicate their message covertly to affect consumers cognition. They also tend to do so because they are unlikely to accept the responsibility of advertisements. That is, they tend to depend on the context rather than the literal meaning of the ads in sending their messages. Therefore, this study contributes to motivate people to think deeply before buying a product. That is, it advices us to be aware of the underlying meaning of the ads and not to be tricked by colors, music, celebrities pictures and other elements employed in the ads. As a result, this study is conducted to get our attention to the importance of the inference by indicating that there are different types of inference. The conventional one , which can be derived from the literal meaning of the word, and the non-conventional one, which can be derived from either following or violating the maxims of cooperation. It can be silent once it follows the maxims of cooperation or flouting once it violates them. These inferences are covert, if the advertiser is unlikely to accept its responsibility, otherwise it will be overt.

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Appendix:
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